First Nations Forestry Program Programme forestier des Premières nations

A joint Natural Resources Canada and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada program.

February/March 2011

Success Stories: Aboriginal Youth in Forestry

Building on the popularity of the *2009 FNFP Success Stories* publication, our next edition is almost ready for distribution. It will focus on initiatives that engage Aboriginal youth in forestry and involve partnerships between government, industry, NGOs and Aboriginal communities. Examples of youth focused projects to be featured in the publication: on-the-job training, internships, mentorships, skills development, and career counselling.

The *Success Stories: Aboriginal Youth in Forestry* publication is slated to be available this coming spring.

FNFP National Council Plenary Meets to Discuss New Federal Approach to Economic Opportunities in Forestry

On January 11-12, 2011, a two day meeting was held involving the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP) National Council, a representative selection of FNFP Provincial/Territorial Management Committee (PTMC) members from across Canada, and officials from several federal departments. The focus of the meeting was on the government's Aboriginal Economic Development Framework, what it means for Aboriginal forestry and for federal government supports in Aboriginal forestry.

Natural Resources Canada's Canadian Forest Service (NRCan-CFS) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) made a joint presentation on a new proposed federal approach to Aboriginal forestry which will coincide with the planned expiry of the FNFP on March 31, 2011. The new approach will seek to have better coordination between federal departments, and will focus on facilitating major forestry project partnerships involving communities, governments and industry. At the meeting, several major opportunities were identified and discussed. A series of regional opportunities workshops will be held across Canada in February to explore how the new approach can benefit Aboriginal forestry, involving Aboriginal forestry practitioners, community officials, industry and government officials. A follow-up meeting with the FNFP National Council

is planned for late March, 2011.

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Log cabin building course gives Black River First Nation youth transferable skills

Cabin building skills are a useful asset in communities like the Black River First Nation, where hunting and trapping are common pursuits and a log cabin is often a necessity in hard-to-access forest areas. So it makes perfect sense for the local Life Skills Training Centre to offer a course that helps young people acquire these skills.

"Our intention was to expose young people to a trade that has traditional importance and to provide them with transferable skills that could help them find employment," says Jack Johnson, Black River's Program Manager, Special Projects and Alternative Education.

The course, which was supported by the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), is designed to provide eight to twelve students with hands-on training over a four- to six-week period. The students learn to identify trees and cut and prepare logs, and they participate in building one or more cabins.

In 2009–2010 five students completed the first part of the course, learning to harvest and prepare the logs, and six more participated in the cabin-building segment. Jack estimates that four people attended the course from beginning to end, and now have all the skills required to build log cabins.

"With these skills they can find work anytime and anywhere," he says. "They also have the basics now and can pursue careers in logging or forestry, in non-timber forest products, in carpentry and so on. Some of the graduates took jobs with the local logging firm and some bought their own equipment to start businesses." The Life Skills Training Centre is planning a log milling course for the 2010–2011 season, and it's already swamped with applicants. "We have a budget to train three people, and we have 16 or 17 ready to sign up!" Jack says.

"In the short term, we may be able to develop a market for milled logs," he says, "but in the long term I think the community needs to look at developing eco-tourism and non-timber forestry. We're in an ideal place for eco-tourism—only about two hours north of Winnipeg."

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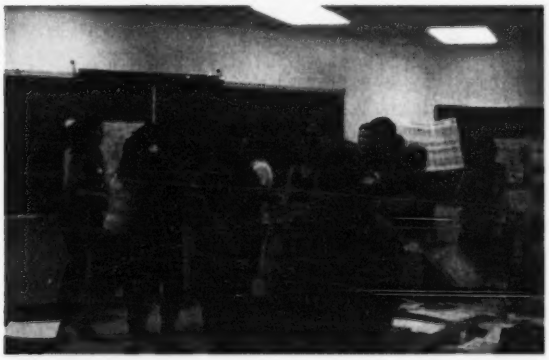
On-line curriculum helps bring focus to traditional teaching methods

The educational information available about Saskatchewan's natural resources is as plentiful as the resources themselves. But it can only be of value if teachers and students are able to access the information and put it to good use. This is what the Saskatchewan Forestry Association (SFA) had in mind when it launched the Focus on Forests – Aboriginal Education Initiative Online.

The SFA has long been developing educational resources about Saskatchewan's forests. But most teachers acquired the materials at conventions, which were not always accessible to teachers from First Nations. "There was a gap in getting the resources out to teachers at band schools," says Bernadette Slager, SFA Education Coordinator. "We decided to create some Focus on Forests First Nations lessons and put them online... so that any teacher in the province could access them."

In partnership with the Prince Albert Model Forest—with additional support from the First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), Northern Lights School Division (NLSD) and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN)—the SFA created nine online lessons, three each for elementary, middle and high schools. The lessons combine modern forestry practices with historical and cultural knowledge, and feature traditional educational methods such as storytelling, talking-stick and circle teaching.



"Students of First Nation descent feel more comfortable being taught in a way they can relate to," says Bernadette. She points out that storytelling is a particularly effective means of reaching these students because it connects with their way of life and offers a continuance of what they see at home in their communities.

All of the lessons are available through the SFA website, www.whitebirch.ca. They were also put onto CD and distributed to every band in Saskatchewan to ensure that First Nation teachers were aware of the new Focus on Forests curriculum.

Now in its second year, the program has been very effective across the province, generating positive feedback from schools in all the bands. Given the warm reception Focus on Forests has received, Bernadette hopes that the SFA will be able to secure enough funding to continue developing lessons that incorporate traditional teaching styles. The demand is clearly there; now, all the program needs is enough support to keep Saskatchewan's First Nation youth "thinking forestry".

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Did you know?

Forestry provides opportunities for Aboriginal communities

According to 2001 and 2006 Censuses, the forestry industry continues to be a major economic opportunity for Aboriginal communities:

- In 2006, 3.5 percent of the Aboriginal labour force worked in the forest sector, compared with 1.8 percent of the non-Aboriginal labour force.
- The median age of Aboriginal people was 27, compared with 40 for the non-Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal youth (age 15 to 24) constituted 17.6 percent of the Aboriginal labour force in the forest sector, compared with 13.1 percent for non-Aboriginal youth.
- In 2006, Aboriginal women represented 14 percent of the Aboriginal labour force in the forest sector, compared with 16.4 percent for non-Aboriginal women.
- Between 2001 and 2006, the number of Aboriginal women participating in the forest sector labour force increased by 7.2% compared to a 4.8% decrease for Aboriginal men.

For more information on Canada's Aboriginal Communities and their participation in the forest-based sector, please read the Canadian Forest Services fact sheet entitled *Aboriginal Communities and Forestry* which can be found at this link: http://warehouse.pfc.forestry.ca/HQ/31973.pdf.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of Canada (AFOA) 2011 National Conference
February 15-17, 2011
Westin Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver, BC
For more information visit: www.afoa.ca/conference/2011/english/index.html

9th Annual Aboriginal Forum
March 21-22, 2011
Hilton Québec, Québec, QC
For more information visit: www.insightinfo.com/forumautochtone (in French only)

A National Forum on First Nations Forest Land Stewardship
March 29th – 30th, 2011
Minto Suite Hotel, Ottawa, ON
For more information visit: www.nafaforestry.org